

Washington, D.C. - Congresswoman Melissa Bean (IL-08) testified today during a hearing before the U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, urging support of H.R. 6707, a bill that would clarify that the Surface Transportation Board must consider the effects of rail expansion on local communities and taxpayers as part of its core mission.

Bean joined the bill sponsor, House Transportation Committee Chairman James Oberstar (MN-08) as an original cosponsor of the bill as part of her fight against Canadian National Railway's proposed purchase of the EJ&E rail line. Bean first alerted Oberstar to the devastating impact of the proposed CN transaction when she brought him on a tour of the region earlier this year.

In her testimony, Congresswoman Bean stated, "There are well over 40 communities along the EJ&E in Illinois and Northwest Indiana whose families will experience a 400 to 900 percent increase in freight train traffic. That is why there is strong bipartisan opposition to this deal...The TRACS Act is a commonsense solution that will hold the STB accountable, giving equal consideration to the communities and the American taxpayer we serve as to the railroad industry and their customers."

The Taking Responsible Action for Community Safety (TRACS) Act, H.R. 6707, would clarify the board's authority over any transaction involving at least one major (Class 1) railroad and would require the STB to consider "the safety and environmental effects of the proposed transaction, including the effects on local communities against the potential benefits to commerce." If the adverse effects on communities are significant or outweigh the potential benefits to commerce and competitiveness, the STB would be required to disapprove or mitigate the transaction.

Chairman Oberstar said in his opening remarks that the STB should encourage improvements in our freight rail infrastructure but, "that role should not trump all other concerns. That's not good public policy."

The Committee heard testimony from Congresswoman Bean along with Congresswoman Judy

Biggert (IL-13), Congressman Bill Foster (IL-14), Congressman Don Manzullo (IL-14), Congressman Peter Roskam (IL-16), Congressman Peter Vislosky (IN-1), STB board members, and other stakeholders.

“The current STB process puts the interests of industry over those of American families and taxpayers,” Bean said. “As we heard in testimony today, the current process is antiquated and has little regard for the welfare of local communities and American taxpayers. The TRACS Act provides balance and better reflects American values by clarifying the rights of our constituents and communities.”

The TRACS Act, H.R. 6707, is sponsored by Rep. James Oberstar (MN-08), and is originally cosponsored by Reps. Melissa Bean (IL-08), Judy Biggert (IL-13), Pete Visclosky (IN-01), Bill Foster (IL-14), Don Manzullo (IL-16), Peter Roskam (IL-6), Dave Hobson (OH-07), Richard Neal (MA-02), Mike Thompson (CA-01), Steve Kagen (WI-08), Ron Kind (WI-03), Debbie Wasserman Schultz (FL-20), Kathy Castor (FL-11), Shelly Berkley (NV-01), Darlene Hooley (OR-05), and Bruce Braley (IA-01), Deborah Pryce (OH-15), Wayne Gilchrest (MD-1), Ray LaHood (IL-18), and Bud Cramer (AL-5).